

Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended) A method of processing a call, the method comprising:

informing the customers of the telecommunications system that one of a plurality of unique sets of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings is normally, but not always, associated with one type of communications device that is connectable to a telecommunications system;

assigning one of a plurality of ~~unique multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone numbers to each selected customer of the telecommunications system within each area code of each local area and granting said each selected customer having a specific communications device that is connected to the telecommunications system the exclusive right to optionally use a combination comprising any one of said unique sets of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings plus said ~~unique multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number to identify the specific communications device other than a ~~land voice line~~ landline device to the other customers of the telecommunications system;

receiving a sequence of signals representing a specific set of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings plus a specific ~~unique multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number that has been dialed by a caller, the combination of the specific set of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings

plus said specific ~~multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number identifying the specific communications device that is the destination for said call; and

connecting said call to the specific communications device that is the destination for said call without the need for the telecommunications system to necessarily determining determine the type of communications device to which the call is directed;

thereby providing ~~about~~ 7.92 million assignable combinations for landline voice ~~communication~~ communications devices within each area code, ~~about~~ 7.92 million assignable combinations for facsimile, or second ~~land line~~ landline voice, communications devices within each area code, and ~~about 7.92~~ 71.28 million assignable combinations for cellular telephone ~~communication~~ communications devices within each area code, which equals a grand total of 87.12 million assignable combinations available within each area code;

thereby ~~at least about tripling~~ increasing by a factor of 11 the number of assignable combinations within each area code when compared to the number of assignable numbers available within an area code of a conventional telecommunications system;

thereby allowing at least ~~about sixty-six percent fewer area codes to be used to serve local areas~~ the number of area codes to be reduced from 302 to 54 when compared to a said conventional telecommunications system; ~~and~~

thereby ~~substantially~~ eliminating the overlay practice of providing two area codes in a specific local area and requiring customers to dial three extra digits or ten digits to reach a specific communications device within a said specific local area;

thereby providing three separate and distinct numbering complements consisting of a first complement of common 7-digit telephone numbers for landline voice communications devices, a

second complement of 8-digit combinations containing a # symbol for facsimile communications devices, and a third complement of 8-digit or 9-digit combinations containing a * symbol for cellular communications devices, thereby eliminating the extensive processing required by said conventional telecommunications system to determine whether a common 7-digit telephone number is being used by a landline voice communications device, a facsimile communications device or a cellular communications device; and

thereby eliminating the practice of spitting a region of said conventional telecommunications system previously served by an existing single area code into two halves whenever the existing area code reaches its maximum capacity of 7.92 million subscribers, and adding a new area code in one of the halves of the region, forcing one half or 3.96 million subscribers to accept a new 10-digit telephone number containing said new area code, at a great level of inconvenience, stress and cost of changing telephone numbers with the addition of each new area code.

Claim 2 (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the specific set of ~~prefix~~ ~~characteristics~~ symbol headings is ~~the~~ a # symbol and the # symbol plus said specific ~~multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number identifies a specific fax machine or a specific second voice line with or without an associated facsimile machine.

Claim 3 (currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the specific set of ~~prefix~~ ~~characteristics~~ symbol headings is ~~the~~ a * symbol and ~~the~~ * symbol plus said specific ~~multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number identifies a first specific cellular telephone.

Claim 4 (currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the specific set of ~~prefix~~ symbol headings is a digit plus the * symbol and the * symbol plus said specific ~~multi-digit~~ common 7-digit telephone number identifies another specific cellular telephone.

Claims 5-9 (cancelled)

Claim 10 (currently amended) A method of directing a call to a specific communications device, comprising:

announcing to the customers of a telecommunications system that one of a plurality of unique symbols is normally associated with a particular type of communications device that is connectable to a telecommunications system;

assigning one of a plurality of ~~unique~~ common 7-digit telephone numbers to each selected customer of the telecommunications system and granting said each selected customer having a specific communications device the exclusive right to optionally use a combination comprising any one of said unique symbols plus said ~~unique~~ common 7-digit telephone number to identify the specific communications device to other customers of the telecommunications system; and

receiving a call having been initiated by a caller by dialing a combination comprising a specific unique symbol and a specific common 7-digit telephone number;

determining the destination indicated by the combination without determining the type of communications device to which the call is directed; and

routing the call to the specific communications device represented by the combination.

Claims 11 (currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the specific unique symbol is ~~the~~ a pound key and the pound key plus said specific common 7-digit telephone number identifies a specific ~~fax~~ facsimile machine or a specific second voice line with or without an associated ~~fax~~ facsimile machine.

Claim 12 (currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the specific unique symbol is ~~the~~ a star key and star key plus said specific common 7-digit telephone number identifies a first specific cellular telephone.

Claim 13 (currently amended) The method of claim 10, wherein the specific unique symbol is a digit plus the star key and star key plus said common 7-digit specific telephone number identifies another specific cellular telephone.

Claim 14 (currently amended) The method of claim 10, further comprising directing the call to a cellular processing network if the specific unique symbol and the specific common 7-digit telephone number indicates that the call is being made to a specific cellular telephone.

Claim 15 (currently amended) A system for processing a call made to a telephone number and directed to a specific communications device to which that telephone number is assigned, the system comprising:

means for announcing to the customers of a telecommunications system that one of a plurality of suggested sets of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings is normally associated with a single type of communications device that is connectable to a telecommunications system;

means for assigning one of a plurality of common telephone numbers to each selected customer of the telecommunications system and granting said each selected customer having a specific communications device the exclusive right to optionally use a combination comprising any one of said suggested sets of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings plus said common telephone number to identify the specific communications device to other customers of the telecommunications system;

a sequence of signals representing a specific set of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings and a specific common telephone number that have been dialed by a caller, the sequence of signals being a directory number for the specific communications device, the set of ~~prefix characteristics~~ symbol headings immediately preceding the common telephone number, being distinguishable from said common telephone number and together with said common telephone number defining a destination for said call, each common telephone number having at least one destination; and

a routing apparatus having a switching component and an identification component for determining the intended destination of the call without determining the type of communications device to which the call is directed and connecting the call to that destination.

Claims 16-23 (cancelled)

Claim 24 (currently amended) A routing system for directing calls to different communications devices having identical common 7-digit voice landline telephone numbers, said system comprising:

an administrative subsystem comprising means for informing the customers of a telecommunications system that one of a plurality of ~~suggested-symbols~~ symbol headings is normally associated with each type of communications device that is connectable to a telecommunications system and means for assigning one of a plurality of ~~unique~~ common telephone numbers to each selected customer of the telecommunications system and granting said each selected customer having a specific communications device the exclusive right to optionally use a combination comprising any one of said plurality of ~~suggested-symbols~~ symbol headings plus said ~~unique~~ common telephone number to identify the specific communications device to other customers of the telecommunications system;

a network subsystem having routing apparatus including a switching component and an identification component for processing a call to a destination, the call including a sequence of signals indicating a ~~set of prefix characteristics~~ particular one of said plurality of symbol headings and a particular common telephone number that have been dialed by a caller, ~~the destination being identified by the set of prefix characteristics~~, the sequence of signals being a directory number for the specific communications device; and

at least one communications device assigned to a common telephone number;

wherein said ~~the set of prefix characters~~ particular one of said plurality of symbol headings does not indicate to said routing apparatus that the specific communications device is a particular type of communications device.

Claims 25-34 (cancelled)

Claim 35 (currently amended) In a telecommunications system in which at least some subscribers control a plurality of communications devices, a system for routing a telephone call to a specific communications device of a particular subscriber, said system comprising:

means for accepting a combination comprising a ~~code~~ heading and a common telephone number as an indication that a caller desires to reach the specific communications device of the particular subscriber, said specific communications device of the particular subscriber being reachable by the caller's dialing no other common 7-digit telephone number; and

means for routing said telephone call to the specific communications device of the particular subscriber;

wherein said ~~code~~ heading does not indicate to said means for routing that the specific communications device of the particular subscriber is a particular type of communications device.

Claim 36 (currently amended) The system of claim 35 wherein the ~~means for accepting specific~~ communications device of the particular subscriber is selected from the group consisting of:

- ~~a line~~ another voice landline telephone,
- a cellular or wireless telephone,
- a facsimile machine, and
- a pager.

Claim 37 (currently amended) The system of claim 35 wherein said ~~code~~ heading is selected from the group consisting of:

- a ~~prefix~~ first symbol that precedes an area code,
- a ~~prefix~~ second symbol that follows an area code,
- a ~~suffix~~ third symbol that precedes an area code, and
- a ~~suffix~~ fourth symbol that follows an area code.

Claim 38 (currently amended) The system of claim 35, wherein said ~~code~~ heading is ~~the a~~ # symbol and the # symbol plus said common telephone number identifies a specific ~~fax~~ facsimile machine or a specific second voice line with or without an associated facsimile machine.

Claim 39 (currently amended) The system of claim 35, wherein said ~~code~~ heading is ~~the a~~ * symbol and * symbol plus said common telephone number identifies a first specific cellular telephone.

Claim 40 (currently amended) The system of claim 35, wherein said ~~code~~ heading is a digit plus ~~the a~~ * symbol and the digit plus the * symbol plus said common telephone number identifies another specific cellular telephone.

Claim 41 (currently amended) The system of claim 35, wherein said ~~code~~ heading is a digit plus ~~the a~~ # symbol and the digit plus the # symbol plus said common telephone number identifies another specific voice ~~land line~~ landline device with or without an associated facsimile machine.

Claim 42 (currently amended) In a telecommunications system, a system for routing a telephone call to a specific communications device of a particular subscriber, said system comprising:

means for assigning a common telephone number to the particular subscriber;

means for accepting a the common telephone number alone as an indication that a caller desires to reach the specific communications device of the particular subscriber, said specific communications device of the particular subscriber being a first ~~land-line~~ voice landline telephone;

means for accepting a combination comprising a ~~code~~ symbol and the common telephone number as an indication that the caller desires to reach another specific communications device of the particular subscriber, said specific communications device of the particular subscriber being reachable by the caller's dialing no other common 7-digit telephone number; and

means for routing said telephone call to the specific communications device of the particular subscriber;

wherein said ~~code~~ symbol does not necessarily indicate to said means for routing that the specific communications device of the particular subscriber is a particular type of communications device.

Claim 43 (currently amended) The system of claim 42 wherein at least one communications device must be in service for each particular subscriber, said at least one communications device being selected from the group consisting of said first ~~land-line~~ voice landline telephone, a facsimile machine and a cellular telephone.

Claim 44 (currently amended) The system of claim 42 wherein the ~~means for accepting other~~
specific communications device of the particular subscriber is selected from the group consisting
of:

~~a land line~~ another voice landline telephone,

a facsimile machine, and

a cellular or wireless telephone, ~~and~~

~~————— a facsimile machine.~~

Claim 45 (currently amended) The system of claim 42, wherein said ~~code~~ symbol is ~~the~~ a #
symbol and the # symbol plus said common telephone number identifies a specific fax machine
or a specific second land line telephone.

Claim 46 (currently amended) The system of claim 42, wherein said ~~code~~ symbol is ~~the~~ a *
symbol and the * symbol plus said common telephone number identifies a first specific cellular
telephone.

Claim 47 (currently amended) The system of claim 42, wherein said ~~code~~ symbol is a digit plus
~~the~~ a # symbol and the digit plus the # symbol plus said common telephone number identifies
another specific ~~land line~~ voice landline telephone or another facsimile machine.

Claim 48 (new) The system of claim 42, wherein said symbol is a digit plus a * symbol and the digit plus the * symbol plus said common telephone number identifies another specific cellular telephone.

Claim 49 (new) In a telecommunications system, a routing system for routing a telephone call to a specific communications device of a particular subscriber within an area code, said routing system comprising:

means for assigning a common 7-digit telephone number to the particular subscriber;

means for accepting the common 7-digit telephone number alone as an indication that a caller desires to reach the specific communications device of the particular subscriber, said specific communications device of the particular subscriber being a first voice landline device;

means for accepting an 8-part or 9-part telephone number comprising a heading and the common 7-digit telephone number as an indication that the caller desires to reach another specific communications device of the particular subscriber, said other specific communications device of the particular subscriber being reachable by the caller's dialing no other common 7-digit telephone number; and

means for routing said telephone call to the specific communications device of the particular subscriber;

wherein said heading does not indicate to said means for routing that the call is a particular type of communication;

wherein said caller has the option of using as the heading a # for a facsimile device or a second voice device, a * for a first cellular device, or a 2*, a 3*, a 4*, a 5*, a 6*, a 7*, a 8*, or a 9* for another cellular device; and

wherein 7.92 million voice landline devices or other devices, 7.92 million facsimile devices or other devices, and 71.28 million cellular devices or other devices are reached with the area code, for a total of 87.12 million communications devices of any type being reachable within the area code.

Claim 50 (new) In a telecommunications system, a method for routing a telephone call to a specific communications device of one of a plurality of subscribers within an area code, said method for routing comprising:

assigning a common 7-digit telephone number to the one of a plurality of subscribers;

accepting the common 7-digit telephone number alone as an indication that a caller desires to reach the specific communications device of the one of a plurality of subscribers, said specific communications device being a first voice landline device;

accepting an 8-part or 9-part telephone number comprising a heading and the common 7-digit telephone number as an indication that the caller desires to reach another specific communications device of the one of a plurality of subscribers, said other specific communications device being reachable by the caller's dialing no other common 7-digit telephone number; and

routing said telephone call to the specific communications device of the one of the plurality of subscribers;

wherein said heading does not indicate to said system that the call is a particular type of communication;

wherein said caller has the option of using as the heading a # for a facsimile device or a second landline voice device, a * for a first cellular device, or a 2*, a 3*, a 4*, a 5*, a 6*, a 7*, a 8*, or a 9* for another cellular device; and

wherein 7.92 million voice landline devices or other devices, 7.92 million facsimile devices or other devices, and 71.28 million cellular devices or other devices are reachable with the area code, for a total of 87.12 million communications devices of any type being reachable within the area code.

Claim 51 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

increasing the total number of telephone numbers that are available to said caller in the area code from 7.92 million to 87.12 million without changing the common 7-digit telephone number that is assigned to any of the plurality of subscribers, thereby avoiding the inconvenience, stress and cost to any of the plurality of subscribers of changing that common 7-digit telephone number.

Claim 52 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

increasing the total number of telephone numbers that are available to said caller within the area code by a factor of 11 without changing the specific common 7-digit telephone number that is assigned to any of the plurality of subscribers, thereby eliminating the present overlay practice of having two area codes in any geographic region, which practice requires mandatory

local 10-digit dialing of telephone numbers that must include one of the two area codes even if the one area code is the area code of said caller.

Claim 53 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

routing said telephone call without requiring the caller to dial a 10-digit telephone number within any geographic region having a requirement for no more than 87.12 million telephone numbers, said 10-digit number comprising an overlay area code and a new common 7-digit telephone number.

Claim 54 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising

accepting a 10-part or telephone number comprising the heading and the common 7-digit telephone number as an indication that the caller desires to reach a cellular communications device of the one of a plurality of particular subscribers, said heading comprising a two-digit number in the range 20 through 99 plus a *.

Claim 55 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

increasing the total number of cellular telephone numbers that are available to said caller in the area code to 71.28 million, thereby matching consumer demand for cellular telephone numbers, which is growing at a faster rate than the demand for landline telephone numbers.

Claim 56 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

encouraging the plurality of subscribers not to use any common 7-digit telephone number as a destination of a facsimile communication or a cellular communication, thereby increasing the number of common 7-digit telephone numbers that are available to said caller as the destination for a voice landline communication within the area code by a factor of up to 3.

Claim 57 (new) The method of claim 50, further comprising:

providing a first complement of telephone numbers that are recommended for use to identify voice landline telephones, a second complement of telephone numbers that are recommended for use to identify facsimile machines and a third complement of telephone numbers that are recommended for use to identify cellular telephones, without affecting the way the telephone call is processed in existing public switched telephone networks; and

eliminating the practice of spitting a region previously served by an existing single area code into two halves whenever the existing area code reaches its maximum capacity of 7.92 million subscribers, and adding a new area code in one of the halves of the region, forcing one half or 3.96 million subscribers to accept a new 10-digit telephone number containing said new area code, at a great level of inconvenience, stress and cost of changing telephone numbers with the addition of each new area code.

Claim 58 (new) In a telecommunications system having 199.1 million residential subscribers, a method for routing a telephone call to a specific communications device of one of said residential subscribers, said method for routing comprising:

assigning a common 7-digit telephone number to the residential subscribers;

accepting the common 7-digit telephone number alone as an indication that a caller desires to reach a first voice landline communications device of the residential subscriber or accepting an 8-part or 9-part telephone number comprising a heading and the common 7-digit common telephone number as an indication that the caller desires to reach a cellular telephone communications device of the residential subscriber, said cellular telephone communications device being reachable by the caller's dialing no other common 7-digit telephone number; and routing said telephone call to the appropriate communications device of the residential subscriber;

wherein said heading does not indicate to said telecommunications system that the call is a particular type of communication; and

wherein implementation of said accepting step reduces the number of 7-digit common telephone numbers that must be assigned to cellular telephone communications devices by 199.1 million when all of said residential subscribers have a cellular telephone communications device, thereby releasing the 199.1 million 7-digit common telephone numbers for other uses.